

UTAH COMMISSION ^[1249]

MINUTE BOOKS, 1882-1896

4.0 cu. ft. (10 vols.), and 3 reels of microfilm

DESCRIPTION: These seven volumes detail the activities and document the philosophies of members of the Utah Commission. The Utah Commission, officially known as the Board of Registration and Election in the Territory of Utah, was established under the federal anti-polygamy act known as the Edmunds Act in 1882. The same act vacated all offices and prevented polygamists from registering to vote, voting, or holding office; the Utah Commission was given oversight of compliance with the act. Five members were appointed by the U.S. president with the consent of the U.S. senate. The duties of the commission were defined as "each and every duty relating to the registration of voters, the conduct of elections, the receiving or rejection of votes, and the canvassing and returning of the same, and the issuing of certificates or other evidence of election in said Territory." ("An Act [Edmunds Act] to amend section fifty-three hundred and fifty-two of the Revised Statutes of the United States, in reference to bigamy, and for other purposes, section 9." Utah Commission series 1126, Utah State Archives, Volume A, p. 5).

The series begins in volume A with a transcription of the Edmunds Act and Chester Arthur's appointments of the original five commissioners. Additional appointments were made over the years as terms expired or commissioners resigned. Their appointments and oaths are also entered. Later legislation, notably the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, and pertinent court rulings are noted as well. The series ends in volume G with the annual report of the commission following Utah's admission as a state in 1896 and the dissolution of the Utah Commission.

The dates, times, and attendance for each meeting of the commission are recorded along with a description of the business conducted. Minor entries in the minutes include location of office space, hiring and paying of clerical personnel, payment of election officials and related expenses, etc. Polling places, new precincts, and redistricting are also covered.

The major portion of the volumes is devoted to election procedures. The commission appointed registration officers and judges of elections in each precinct for each election, and those appointments are listed. The rules and regulations promulgated by the commission to assist the officials in their duties are copied into the minutes or glued in as the final printed circulars. The commission also appointed a Board of Canvassers and wrote similar rules and regulations for their benefit.

The Commission and the board canvassed election returns from around the state. The returns from elected territory-wide offices, such as delegate to Congress and University Lands Commission, down to precinct level offices, such as justice of the peace and constable, are entered in the minutes. The commission also appointed canvassers and broadly oversaw municipal elections, but the returns for these are not recorded. Protests surrounding voter registration issues, candidates for election, or ballot tampering were received and resolved, the discussions being recorded in the minutes.

The second most extensive entries are the reports of the commission to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The reports detail not only the commission's activities, but the members' perceptions of the sociopolitical climate in Utah and their suggestions for federal legislation. The annual reports frequently summarize for the Interior Secretary the historical context of Mormon and non-Mormon conflicts, both in regard to polygamy and secular matters. The reports may be hand written or published copies from the government printing office attached to the minutes; in either case they form voluminous essays on topics directly and peripherally related to the commission's purpose.

In the reports, major movements on the part of the federal government, such as the Edmunds-Tucker Act or President Harrison's granting of amnesty to disenfranchised polygamists in 1893, are documented and discussed as are major movements on the part of the territory or Mormon Church, such as repeated attempts for constitutional conventions (including details on the successful 1896 convention) or Wilford Woodruff's Manifesto ending LDS Church sanction of the practice of polygamy. Topics included in the reports cover the elections, extent of polygamy, irrigated lands and their control by Mormons, geology and the influx of non-Mormon miners, Mormon history and theology, and even the public and parochial schools. The background presented in the discussion of these topics is often used to explain the commission's accomplishments and problems, and to substantiate appeals for additional legislation to curb polygamy and Mormon secular influence.

ARRANGEMENT: Volumes and their entries are chronological with the volumes labeled alphabetically. Index entries are alphabetical by first letter of subject.

RELATED RECORDS: The ELECTION PAPERS, series 364, contain certificates of election issued by the commission during the 1882-1896 period as well as returns and other election papers from both before and after those dates. The Commission also kept ELECTION RETURNS REGISTERS, series 396, from 1891-1895. Commissions issued to

elections officers monitoring elections are found in a COMMISSION REGISTER, series 304. Further financial records of the commission may be found in ACCOUNT LEDGERS, series 1125. LETTERBOOKS, series 1139, contains letters mailed in conjunction with their activities. REPORTS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR are also found in series 85194.

CUSTODY HISTORY: Upon dissolution of the Utah Commission in 1896, their records and office equipment were turned over to the Secretary of State and the Governor of Utah. This included volumes A-G plus indices, as well as 48 other volumes. The archives acquired 5 cu. ft. of Utah Commission ledgers from the Secretary of State in 1957.

PROCESSING NOTE: The minute books were microfilmed for security purposes in 1960. Archival processing was completed in 1989 by A.C. Cone.

CONTAINER LIST

Reel	Box	Description
1	1	Vol. A, Index
1	1	Vol. A, July 18, 1882-Nov. 14, 1884
2	1	Vol. B, Index
2	1	Vol. B, Nov. 14, 1884-July 9, 1887
3	1	Vol. C, July 16, 1887-Sept. 30, 1887
3	2	Vol. C, Sept. 30, 1887-Nov. 12, 1888
4	2	Vol. D, Index
4	2	Vol. D, Nov. 12, 1888-Aug. 22, 1890
5	2	Vol. E, Aug. 24, 1890-Mar. 23, 1893
6	2	Vol. F, June 15, 1893-July 22, 1893
6	3	Vol. F, July 25, 1893-May 7, 1894
7	3	Vol. G, Apr. 27, 1894-June 30, 1896